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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this writing sampler is to provide teachers and students with work representing each of the rubric score points for the stand alone writing prompt on the 2001 Delaware Student Testing Program. The student papers included in this document are part of the "anchor sets" (collections of scored student work "anchored" to each of the score points on the Delaware writing rubric) created by Delaware teachers in February of 2001. Papers in the anchor set represent a consensus of thinking by the teacher committee that score it; the complete sets are used to train scorers of the Delaware student papers. Each student paper in this sampler includes a commentary explaining the reasoning for the assigned score point. Suggestions that might improve the student writing are also included. (RS)

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CS

Spring 2001

ED 482 937

DELAWARE

STUDENT TESTING PROGRAM

ITEM SAMPLER

COMMENTARIES FOR 2001

WRITING PROMPTS

Grades 3, 5, 8, and 10

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CS 510 789

2001 Writing Stand Alone Prompt
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this writing sampler is to provide teachers and students with student work representing each of the rubric score points for the stand alone prompt on the 2001 Delaware Student Testing Program. The student papers included in this document are part of the anchor sets created by Delaware teachers in February of 2001.

An anchor set is a collection of scored student work "anchored" to each of the score points on the Delaware writing rubric. Each paper in the anchor set represents a consensus of thinking by the teacher committee that scored it. Completed anchor sets are used by Harcourt to train the scorers that score the Delaware student papers.

Each student paper in the sampler includes a commentary explaining the reasoning for the assigned score point. Suggestions that might improve the student writing are also included.

Delaware Student Testing Program - General Rubric for Writing

The following characteristics determine the success of the response in meeting the needs of the audience and fulfilling the writing purpose.

Score of 5	Score of 4	Score of 3	Score of 2	Score of 1
Score point 5 meets all the criteria listed in score point 4. In addition, a paper receiving this score shows an exceptional awareness of readers' concerns and needs. The student may have shown an exceptional use of: • Development strategies specific to the purpose for writing • Distinctive style, voice, tone • Literary devices • Compositional risks	Unified with smooth transitions, a clear and logical progression of ideas, and an effective introduction and closing. Sufficient, specific, and relevant details that are fully elaborated. Consistently complete sentences with appropriate variety in length and structure. A consistent style with precise and vivid word choice. Few, if any, errors in standard written English that do not interfere with understanding.	Generally unified with some transitions, a clear progression of ideas, and an introduction and closing. Specific details but may be insufficient, irrelevant, or not fully elaborated. Generally complete sentences with sufficient variety in length and structure. Some style and generally precise word choice. Some errors in standard written English that rarely interfere with understanding.	Minimally unified and may lack transitions or an introduction or closing. Some specific details but may be insufficient, irrelevant, and/or not elaborated. Some sentence formation errors and a lack of sentence variety. Sometimes general and repetitive word choice. Several kinds of errors in standard written English that interfere with understanding.	Lacks unity. No or few specific details that are minimally elaborated. Frequent and severe sentence formation errors and/or a lack of sentence variety. Often general, repetitive, and/or confusing word choice. Frequent and severe errors in standard written English that interfere with understanding.

For non-scorable responses see below:

- Blank
- Off topic
- Written in a language other than English
- Refusal
- Illegible
- Insufficient

DIRECTIONS

Read the writing prompt in the box below.

Writing Prompt
Your principal is thinking about not having recess time next year. Before she decides what to do, she wants to know what students think. Write a letter to the principal. Try to convince her to agree with what you think about having no school recesses next year.

Thinking about the following will help you focus and plan your writing.

- **Should elementary students have school recesses?**
- **Think of as many good reasons as you can to support your opinion. Think about why each of your reasons is a good reason.**
- **Think about what you could say to make the principal agree with you.**

GRADE 3 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 1

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on developing a more effective introduction and conclusion.
- Look for places to expand and elaborate ideas.
- Work on sentence structure.

I think that in all schools recesses but not in big grades from now. I think with out recesses it will get very boring and if know you do not what our kids to be bord. Evey one needs som fun sometimes even you do to you people are not very happy with the playground. I Think that the playground is very good for kids my age.

Comments:

This brief response is minimally developed with few elaborated details. The frequent and severe sentence formation errors interfere with readers' understanding. There is no clear introduction and closing, although there is an attempt to address the prompt. There is also some sense of audience displayed.

GRADE 3 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 2

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on sentence variety.
- Look for places to elaborate on ideas to convince the audience.
- Work on a more effective opening and closing.

Dear Miss.

I think we should have resses. We think we sould have some fresh air. We like 15 minites or more plese. We will play on the play ground every day. We would like somtimes to sterech a little bit. Some of us like to make friends at resses. Then the school will be a much better place. We have lots of fun at resses. We play football, tag, hide inge seek, swing on the swings, run around, play basketball and some of us gust hang around. At resses we get the most exercise. We run, Jump, walk, clim, hang.

Turely yours,

Comments:

Response is minimally organized with an ineffective opening and no evidence of a closing. Sentence structure is repetitive (for example, the first sentences begin with we should, we will, etc.). There are numerous reasons but they are not elaborated. Most ideas are listed and repeated rather than developed.

Score Point 3

Dear

Hi my name is an I'm here to tell you why you Shouldn't take recess away. So sit back and relax.

My first reason is exercising. Exercising is really good for you at recess, like running and walking. Sometimes it helps put strengh into your legs.

My second reason is the tree. The tree can help us from the sun and from sunburn. When the wind blows you'll get a lot of fresh air, when your near the tree.

My third reason is having fun. You see having fun is the exercising thing of all. Outside you see us have fun like Playing tag and Swing on the swings and Playing Hide and go Seek.

Last but not least is why you Shouldn't let us have recess. You Should let us go out for recess so that we can get alot of energy for school.

Well I hope you enjoyed my letter very much. I hope you understand why! I

Bye

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on developing relevant and sufficient details aimed at convincing the reader of your arguments.
- Work on smooth transitions and an effective introduction and closing.
- Work on developing style and precise word choice.

Comments:

The writer uses an effective organizing structure (first, second…) but employs ineffectively developed or irrelevant arguments. Although there is an opening and closing, both need to be more effective. While there is an attempt at style in the introduction (sit back and relax), overall the piece lacks style and precise word choice.

Score Point 4

Dear Principal,

I think that next year we sould have our recess because think how you would feel if you were just a kid and have been working in a hot class room all day long. I bet you would like some free time to play and hang out with your friends. Plus I think having recess is good for us because we need exercise and time to play and jump and skip and run. Take it from a kid recess is one of the only times kids get to have a good time. First of all we get a long time alone away from pencles, paper and worksheets. All of those things can be very stressful to all of us kids. Also recess give us time to relax and have a good time and when we relay and have a good time we for get all of the dreaded work we have to go back to in our classrooms. Once I was out at recess and I forgot all about my spelling test and when I did take it I felt good about it. So you see we need our recess and we would appressiate it very much if you would let us have recess nextyear. THANK YOU!

Sencerly,

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on strengthening the closing.
- Work on expanding details with greater elaboration.

Comments:

This well-organized response has a distinctive style and voice that engages and convinces the audience. While the introduction is effective, the closing is lackluster. Ideas are generally elaborated with sufficient, specific, and relevant details. There is evidence of using an example as part of the argument.

Score Point 5

Dear _____

Imagine you in your youth sitting in the classroom, bored to death, waiting for the teacher to excuse the class for recess, when suddenly the principal announces on the intercom that there will be no recess until further notice. You stay for a moment after school to ask the teacher why the principal abandoned recess. She says she does not know but she knows the principal can be persuaded. Therefore, the moment you get home you begin a letter which will persuade the principal to keep recess. Your ideas are that recess gives the kids a chance to release energy and relaxation, plus, the teachers get a little "time off" too. You begin by writing...

Dear Mr. ____ (for that is your principal's name), it is unfair that you virtually force us to work all day. We need a break, sitting around all day. Without having any fun, we would eventually have the attention span of a flea. But, with a twenty-minute recess every day at noon, we would be able to unleash all of that excess energy. Plus, we get lots of exercise while releasing all of those miscellaneous energy cells. Exercise is extremely necessary. Remember: Exercise/release extra energy = awesome students. No exercise/no releasing energy = bad students.

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Score Point 5 (continued)

At about midday, you get tired from school. Then, you can go out to recess and relax. It's a nice break from working so hard. Also, if you are wound up than you can run and climb. But if you wish to take your leisure you may just sit and swing. Or you may want to just hang out and talk with your friends. Everyone needs a chance to relax.

Since everyone needs to relax, stands to reason teachers need to relax too, right? After a long day in which teachers have been yelling at a group of hyperactive kids, it stands to reason they would be sore, tired, and annoyed because they have to grade papers. And they would have to wait for the end of the day to do that. But, at recess, they can grade papers and have time to relax when they get home. After all they've done to teach us, you reward them by forcing them to do work all night? I don't think that's very fair.

In conclusion Mrs. ... isn't this the sort of letter you would write to your principal? You can tell that I feel strongly about keeping recess. How could anyone take away the privilege of having something which consumes energy, posses comfort (these two are for the kids), and gives relaxation?

Comments:

Exceptional use of literary devices, distinctive style, and voice sets this piece apart from others. It is evident the author feels comfortable taking compositional risks. The writer has an insightful awareness of audience. Precise and vivid word choice permeates the piece, and vocabulary is used appropriately. Details are specific, sufficient, and fully elaborated. Various sentence lengths and structure enhance the flow of the writing.

DIRECTIONS

Read the writing prompt in the box below.

Writing Prompt
The editor of your newspaper is putting together a student section of the newspaper. Students have been asked to write about their favorite holiday or tradition for this section. Write an article about your favorite holiday or tradition to send to the newspaper.

Thinking about the following will help you focus and plan your writing.

- **What is your favorite holiday or tradition?**
- **Describe this holiday or tradition.**
- **What do you and your family do to celebrate your favorite holiday or tradition?**
- **Why is this your favorite holiday or tradition?**

Score Point 1

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Add some specific details about presents and family.
- Work on developing a more effective introduction and closing.

My Favorite holiday
is Chrismas. I get
lots of Perasons. We give
are famliy Perasons to.
This is done time we
get to see all of
the family.
Chrismes is the
best holiday we
Could fave

Comments:

This brief response is minimally developed and lacks organization. The two details are not elaborated. Frequent and severe errors in standard written English interfere with readers' understanding.

Score Point 2

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on expanding the ideas with greater elaboration ("go in the house and play"; "kids cook stuff").
- Work on developing more precise word choice.
- Work on developing a more effective introduction and closing.

Hi I a.m my favorite holiday is Christmas. Christmas is in winter. My family usally puts lights up and a Christmas trees. It is a joy-full time and in my family we go to my aunt Juddys house and have a big dinner with all of my family. It's real cool and fun. We eat and give gifts. Then we go to the creek and look for deer, and fish. After all that we go in the house and play. Usally we play tag. Then most of the kids cook stuff over the fire. The parents do dishes the we take the long ride home.

Comments:

This somewhat "listy" response provides many details, but most are not elaborated. Although the piece is focused on a single idea, the introduction and closing are stilted and ineffective.

Score Point 3

The Joy of Christmas

Hi, my name is and I would like to share a story about my favorite holiday.

Christmas is my favorite holiday because it is full of joy and happyness. We celebrate Christmas by sending letters, making phone calls, and sending presents to family and friends to wish them a merry Christmas.

On Christmas morning, at about 2:00 am, me and my sister, Wen, go down stairs to the first floor, all bundled up in 1 blanket, we walk together and see if the presents have arrived on the cold and dark porch yet. We don't know were to step because it is black dark, except for the outside light post light. Although my sister goes down stairs first before she wakes me up, it is still a suprize for both of up because she never sneaks peaks. Me and Wen are always shaking every moment because we are so nervous and excited. We can't wait to see what is there. Finally we find out what they are, and we are happy. We play with some of our stuff, like a game my sister made and the presents. Then our parents come down.

Soon it is about 7:00 and we get ready to go to church. The rest of the day we listen to Christmas music. Then our hole family plays a family game together.

Every Christmas is joyous as this, and I hope it stays that way!

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Eliminate paragraph 1 ("Hi, my names is...")
- Elaborate on some of the details in paragraph 2.
- Develop a more effective closing.

Comments:

This response is generally unified with some transitions and a clear progression of ideas. Sentences are complete and varied with generally precise word choice ("black dark", "sneaks peaks").

Score Point 4

Christmas

FINAL DRAFT

Christmas is my favorite holiday for many reasons. My first one is my family gets together. I really like when my family gets together because we all get to talk person to person about what is going on in our lifes and lots of old memories, instead of over the phone or the internet. We also like to play fun games like Scrabble and Monopoly. I usually dont win, but it is always really fun. We dont get to do that very often. My family also looks forward to see how people have changed there looks. Like they cut there hair, got glasses and stuff like that. My family and I love getting together and I hope it never ends.

Another thing I like about Christmas is the traditions my family has. One thing we always do is put 24 Hersey Kisses in a bowl and I eat one every night. Then I just count the candies to see how many nights there is till Christmas. Another tradition

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Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on an effective introduction and closing.
- Work on proofreading to avoid errors in grammar.

Score Point 4 (continued)

we have is that my Mom always reads a different version of The Night Before Christmas on Christmas eve. My family also hangs mistle toe from the ceiling. The person who stands under it has to kiss the nearest person. I like to see who kisses who. It's really funny.

Finally, I love getting presents. The night before Christmas, I like laying in my bed thinking about what I may get. Sometimes I think I may get all coal, but that never happens so one because I'm a good kid. The next morning I love opening the presents and seeing what I get. I also like giving presents to other people and watching the faces. It's sometimes is quite funny.

Christmas is my favorite holiday for all of these reasons. It's always great.

Comments:

Despite the limited and mediocre introduction and conclusion, this paper has other characteristics that make it a low 4. The response is unified with smooth transitions. Specific details are fully elaborated ("mistle toe", "Hersey Kisses"). Sentences are varied in length and structure. The minor errors in grammar (verb agreement) do not adversely affect the score of 4.

Score Point 5

Many families have special days or traditions that they celebrate. Different cultures celebrate a variety of holidays. Certainly you have seen the joy in someones eyes when people jump out of hiding spots to surprise someone on their birthday, or other cherished occasion. But my family? Our one and only tradition is a well kept one. So what is it? Our annual Super Bowl bash.

While most people are declaring war on the December winter, My family is vigorously preparing for our Super Bowl Party, which lay weeks to come. Who will be invited? What kind of food should we soup up? What time will it start? When do we send out invitations? Those questions linger in the back of our minds like cobwebs. The rush of winter slows to a stop and it's January, who finds our house into complete and total Chaos.

So now your thinking hundreds of people payed admission. Watch out! here comes the real and absolute shell-shocker! only three of our families are invited to this party. Why? I dont exactly know, but I & you and me I'm perfectly fine with four families, because if there were hundreds we would start preparing in March!

Only the best delicacyes make their way into our party. But if I had to choose the absolute best food, it would have to be Mrs. Lewises Football helmet jelly molds. In addition to the Jell-O, we have homemade buffalo wings, homemade french fries made with penny all, deviled eggs, and best of all home made Ice Cream, Straight from the oven. The taste certainly tastes ten times better then any flavor of Häagen Dáz.

Kickoff is in ten minutes, and the TV isn't even on! we are busily recording predictions. The

(continued on next page)

Score Point 5 (continued)

Competition is fiercer than fighting jaguars, because the victor takes home the left-overs. Last year, the winner who, who else, but me! I found the Green Bay Packers 14 point underdogs.

TWEET! The referees whistle shrills, and the crowd roars like a lion as the soft sound of pigskin hitting shoe starts the game. At about this point I leap my couch and casually stroll over to the buffet and view the regale. As the winner emerges, I leave my territory at the buffet and rush up stairs to match wits on an electronical gridiron of my own on the Nintendo 64. I usually control the winning team from the superbowl down stairs. I usually find, to my enlightenment that there is a fifty two point difference between my score and the actual score.

The conclusion to the football fiesta draws near at about 12:30 AM. My heart grows heavier than a 400 pound rock as the last sound of tires on gravel floats away. I go to bed and wake up at 11:00 AM the next day. The days pass, and the memories of a long-gone party fade away like a ship on the horizon. The months go by until the glory of December arrives again and the endless cycle of preparation starts again. We await the AFC champ, and then the NFC champ. As I start my pondering, and my thoughts are stuck in football, I make my predictions for the winner.

Comments:

This response reflects a distinctive, style, voice, and tone. It has a strong introduction and body. Numerous specific details are fully elaborated ("I leave my territory at the buffet and rush upstairs to match wits on an electronical gridiron…"). Use of similes enhances the tone and style of the piece ("These questions linger in the back of our minds like cobwebs.").

DIRECTIONS

Read the writing prompt in the box below.

Writing Prompt
Your principal read an article that said students who participate in after-school activities do better in school. The principal is considering requiring every student to stay after school and participate in at least one activity. Write a letter to your principal telling why you *do* or *do not* agree with this idea.

Thinking about the following will help you focus and plan your writing.

- **What are some reasons that you might want to participate in after-school activities?**
- **What are some reasons you might not want or be able to participate in after-school activities?**
- **How can you convince the principal to agree with you?**

GRADE 8 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 1

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Look for places to expand and elaborate details to persuade the reader.
- Expand and develop the introduction and conclusion.

Dear Sir,

Please consider requiring students to stay afterschool for afterschool activities. But it should be to their choosing. Its very educational It'll teach kids and at the same time, fun. It would keep kids occupied and also make the school look better.

Sincerely,

Comments:

Although this response addresses the prompt, there are only rudimentary elements of a beginning, middle, and end. There are few specific details ("educational"; "keep kids occupied") which are not elaborated.

GRADE 8 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 2

Dear Principal,

I heard you were having after school activitys and you want every student to attend, to be honest I don't think every student is going to show, because a lot of kids want to get home, they don't want to be in the school building no longer then they have to, atleast I wouldent. Did you come up with the idea? If you did How Long do you plan on having this.

I think it will not make no one any better of a person to stay after school for some activitys. No matter how long you stay after school for activitys you will still be the same person you always were.

Thank you for your time Mr Principal and Please think about what I have said befor you make a decision. And again thank you for your time.

Sincerly

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work to address the topic and fulfill the writing purpose with a clear focus.
- Look for ways to expand and elaborate details that support the argument.
- Work on improving standard written English.

Comments:

Although the introduction has a good start, it wanders and does not fulfill the purpose of persuading the principal. Few specific details ("kids want to get home"; "still be the same person") are developed to support the argument. Some details are irrelevant ("Did you come up with the idea?"; "How long do you plan on having this?") and actually detract from the argument. Several errors in standard written English and sentence formation (numerous run-on sentences, multiple misspellings, capitalization, and usage mistakes) confirm the score of 2.

Score Point 3

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Work on a more effective introduction and closing.
- Explore word choice that promotes a more distinctive style.
- Work on sentence variety and structure.
- Experiment with a variety of transitions to achieve more subtle connections between ideas.

Dear Mr or Mrs Principal, October 6, 1998

I am writing to you to voice my opinion on your idea that requires each student to stay after school for at least one activity. I strongly disagree with you, for many reasons.

First of all, some childern's parents need them to come right home after school is over. The childern may have to clean around the house because guests are coming over that night or maybe to walk down to a bus stop and get a younger brother or sister off the bus and walk with the child, home. Some parents need their child's help at work maybe in a store loading boxes or sweeping the floors.

Secondly, not all parents have the transportation to pick the child up after the activity was over. The adult may still be at work with the car having no way to pick up the child. Many of the child would be stuck at school until the parents got off work.

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Score Point 3 (continued)

The next problem I have with this idea is that some kids may have doctor appointments or dental appointments to go to after school. That might be the only time the parents could get an appointment and get off work. That appointment may also be the only appointment available.

Another big issue is homework! If all the students stayed after school he or she may have no time to do homework. After an activity, a shower, and dinner some students are just to tired and worn out to do anything else, so they go to bed without doing their homework. Then the students grades drop and that is not good at all.

In conclusion, I think that it would be a bad idea to go forth with something like this. I hope that this letter might help you to change your mind on this topic. I would like to thank you for your time and for reading this letter

Respectly yours,

Comments:
The response is unified with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitions connect the clear progression of ideas. There are specific details ("doctor appointments"; "transportation") that are elaborated and relevant to the persuasive writing purpose. Word choice is generally precise, but has little style. Errors in standard written English do not interfere with understanding.

Score Point 4

Dear Principal,

Although I agree that afterschool activities help students do better in school, I do not feel that they should be required.

First of all, if this is made a requirement, there are people who would not want to go. That could ruin the activity for those who do want to participate. Moreover, some kids may feel excluded, because they would not think they are athletic enough or intelligent enough to join these clubs. I also feel that if these pastimes which are meant to be fun, become a school requirement, they will not be as enjoyable. After school activities should remain just that, after school and optional.

Even though I currently participate voluntarily in marching band, an after school activity which I enjoy, I still have trouble finding rides home now and then. This brings up the issue that not everyone has a way home besides the bus. If the person you are riding with, rather it is a parent, friend, or other family member becomes ill, you may have to remain at school for an even longer time.

The final reason I oppose this requirement involves teachers who want to run an activity with students in it who do not want to be there). Teachers already have a tough enough job, and this would cause more of them to have to stay after school. Besides, I would not want to be in an activity with teachers who do not want to stay after school and run it.

I believe that I have made it quite obvious that I do not agree with making after school activities mandatory. They are meant to be fun; I and many other students already enjoy them, but they are not for everybody.

Sincerely,

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Experiment with word choice to further promote style and voice.
- Work on developing a more effective introduction.

Comments:

Although the introduction could be more effective, the closing is effective. In each paragraph, fully elaborated, specific details develop a strong argument that fulfills the writing purpose. The use of precise and convincing language clearly conveys the writer's style. Some transitions are smooth ("even though"), but all contribute to a clear and logical progression of ideas.

Score Point 5

Extracurricular activities are a great thing to take part in during your high School career. This is probably why you, the principal of my School, want to make them mandatory. I think that is an absolutely great idea, because it will make the entire student body much more successful in all of their endeavors. The only downside to an idea such as this is lack of interest from unmotivated students, and perhaps a transportation problem. I have a feeling that all of these barriers can be overcome to make a better, smarter and fitter School.

Activities after School are the best experience that any student can have. They allow that student to study or do something that interests them, and are free to choose amongst a wealth of sports, clubs and interest groups. Doing so will look great on your permanent record, placing you in the upper echelon of students on your level. When colleges see such things they will immediately realize that you are a motivated individual with widespread interests. Chances are you'll learn more, too. Learning things that you normally wouldn't in School can propel you above and beyond many other students. Despite all of these benefits, however, not all students participate in extracurricular activities. It's a shame when there are so many benefits for the individual who is motivated. This is why a requirement might be something students benefit from, not just for ever.

Many activities should be made available so that students can find their niche. Everyone is interested in different things, so as many different sports and clubs as possible should be open to students. Sports should be offered because they build phenomenal discipline and great friendships like nothing else. Kids who join Sports will build a lasting relationship with teammates and coaches, as well as a great deal of respect for others. Clubs do just as good a job at bringing kids together, because everyone in a club shares a common

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Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Experiment with compositional risks.

Score Point 5 (continued)

interest. Members will use this as a springboard to bigger and better things. The only forseeable with all of this is the students who can't stay after school. Even when transportation is provided, there are always kids who have some type of obligation to go home for. It is my opinion that they should be excused, but made to have at least one extra credit to graduate. This way they will still have to do something extra to get their diploma.

Mandatory after school stays will not only benefit individuals, but they will benefit the school as a whole as well. Students will make more friends than they had before, and the student body will gain a sense of togetherness which they never had before. All these young people sharing common interests will be happier with themselves and each other, making for a less tense learning environment. This togetherness will undoubtedly translate into a sense of pride in the school, with pupils openly supporting their peers. The sports teams will get a boost in support and game attendance, causing student morale to rise even more. School pride makes everyone happy, especially when they are participating. These happy students will also be getting better grades, higher self-esteem and extracurricular learning will result in students who are bright as well as happy, projecting a great image for the entire school.

I hope that this barrage of backing clearly shows that I am behind your plan one hundred percent. I believe putting it into motion will gain highly regarded status for our school among other schools. Making extracurricular activities mandatory will also mould a better student body, as individuals and as a whole. If all goes as planned, the near future will bring recognition from schools in our area, because we will smart, happy and proud. I especially will be proud of my school's achievements, and value my experience here for the rest of my life.

Comments:

The essay has an effective introduction and closing. In each paragraph, fully elaborated, specific details develop a strong argument that fulfills the writing purpose. In addition, this paper shows an exceptional awareness of readers' concerns and needs.

DIRECTIONS

Read the writing prompt in the box below.

Writing Prompt
You are completing a job application. As part of the application process, your potential employer requires a writing sample explaining the expression, "*experience is the best teacher*," and telling how it applies to you or someone you know. Write what you will present to your potential employer.

Thinking about the following will help you focus and plan your writing.

- **What might the expression, "*experience is the best teacher*," mean?**
- **What are some experiences you have had (or someone you know has had) which taught you an important lesson?**
- **What did you learn and why was it valuable?**

GRADE 10 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 1

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Offer some specific examples and details (i.e., specific "jobs" rather than "working...at other jobs...")
- Develop a more effective opening and some sense of closure.

What does "experience is the best teacher" mean to me?

To me experience is the best teacher is a true statement. Having more experience means you are better at things you do. Experience is practice. Practice makes you better.

Working and training at other jobs very much like this one, has given me the experience to prove myself a worthy employee.

Comments:

This minimal response defines the meaning of the quotation without offering any details of further explanation. While not riddled with errors, the language is general and repetitive.

Score Point 2

"Experience is the Best Teacher"

this quote "Experience is the Best Teacher" has helped people stay out of trouble and helped people to stay on the right path of life Experience helps a person so they can learn to do the right things instead of the wrong things. Like if you go out with a bunch of friends and try drugs, drink, or even have sex and something happens to you, then you can help others so they don't make the same mistake.

You can help people by informing them of mistakes that have changed your life. And that may just let them see that everyone has a choice in life this may help them stay out of trouble. When going out and teaching them that you may actually end up changing their minds about things such as drinking drugs and sex this may not only help the persons life, but also help the people around them.

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Rather than repeat the opening paragraph, elaborate the details with specific examples.
- Use more vivid words.
- Develop a tighter focus and develop/elaborate it.

Comments:

This highly repetitive "low 2" response offers some details (drugs and sex); however, there is no elaboration. There is a sense of opening and an attempt at closure.

Score Point 3

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Choose one or two appropriate examples and elaborate more fully on them.
- Explore more subtle methods of organization (rather than using prompt's bullet points as *de-facto* outline).

"Experience is the Best Teacher"

"Experience is the best teacher" to me means that the person who has experienced more situations is probably the smarter and more in-tuned one. They probably know more about situations, and how to deal with them. There's been a couple of situations that I have experienced in life that have opened up my mind and taught me things, and in that, I have been able to teach from them.

The first situation I can remember that definitely taught me a lesson was when my best friend committed suicide. This happened a few years ago back in 1997. I remembering hearing the news and I was devastated. She was only a couple of years older than me, and we did everything together. We met in Church at an early age. She was very near and dear to me. But, this taught me a lesson because it taught me to cherish the times I had with her instead of being mad that she did that to herself.

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The next situation I can remember would have to be when my cat got hit by a car. See, I had "DAISY" ever since the day my brother went into the Marine Corps. He was my pride and joy + my world. I loved him more than anything, + well, I guess his time came. But that also taught me a lesson. To love + cherish what you have right now instead of wanting what you can't have.

And, last but not least is when I was a volunteer for an old folks home. I remember volunteering for an older folks home. It was around Christmas time and I had become attached to a couple of the folks. I bought them presents and sang them Christmas songs but that taught to pretty much just love them + everything else.

So, when I hear the phrase "experience is the best teacher" I have to think that it means the more situations you go through the smarter you are. Whether you believe it or not the more situations you experience in life the better off you'll be.

Comments:
This "low 3" response is generally unified but shallow. The obvious organization around the prompt's bullet points keeps the response from being fully developed and elaborated. The conclusion is weak.

GRADE 10 – Commentaries for Writing

Score Point 3

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Continue to challenge the organizational formulas.
- Clarify focus earlier.
- Avoid unnecessary development.

During Seventh grade, I began to take an interest in Field Hockey. I didn't try out, although I regret that decision very much. I would go to the games and watch and even though I had never played before; I wanted so much to be on the field. When Eighth grade finally rolled around, I decided to go out for the team. Throughout the first couple weeks, I found myself discouraged and upset. I felt that I couldn't play well at all, especially under the eyes of my coach.

My coach eventually noticed my dilemma and pulled me aside, one day during practice. She said those six magic words that I may never forget, "Experience is the best teacher, ..." I thought about what she said and although I understood the concept, my skill level did not improve. Later, a close friend also noticed my frustration and advised me to keep playing hard and that the skill would come. I tried extremely hard to think about this as I played.

Weeks past, and I began to notice a difference. Every time I touched the ball, I was determined to learn something new. After

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Score Point 3 (continued)

making a mistake, I would determine if I should've shot, passed, dribbled or dodged. The next time that I was in that situation, I would try to remember what I should've done the last time. The should have's began to work into my play and I saw improvement with each game. My coach noticed a difference too, and praised me for my progression. I began to appreciate my mistakes because they gave me an opportunity to learn.

A pessimist had once said to me, "Practice makes perfect, but nobody's perfect, so why practice?" I used to think that this quote was funny, but I soon realized that it was just ridiculous. Although one will never be perfect, one should strive to come as close as possible. Experience will help to become closer to perfection because learning from mistakes makes for an excellent teacher.

Comments:

This "high 3" response is logically organized although the introduction is somewhat unsettling, jumping right into the narrative without a clear sense of what is to follow. However, the author's risking a narrative introduction rather than adhering to a formula is commended. Use of language is thoughtful and sincere, allowing the author's voice to emerge. Alliteration and clever use of sports terms indicate some promise of a developing narrative style. While there is a sense of closure, the last sentence is perhaps unnecessary.

Score Point 4

Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Proofread for spelling and mechanics.
- Continue to experiment with organization and narrative techniques.

Experiance is the best teacher

When you have not experianced something you cannot really state your opinion on that subject matter. From our every experiance we learn something & maybe simply understand it.

When I was young, I used to talk to my grandfather a lot. He lived through the second World War. He used to tell me all about the war and how terrible it was. I listened to him, but never really understood what it was really like. I did not know what hate can do to people and what people can do to each other in spite of hate.

When I was living in Baku, a city located on the shore of the caspian sea, a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out. My dad was serving in the military and was ordered to defend the Armenian's since the Azeris attacked first. When the Azeris found out that the soviet army was not on their side, the decided to go after the families of the soviet army officers, which included my family. One night when my dad was still at the base, the conflict had reached its peack. The Azeris were not on the move for anyone that was not their own. They had started to pour into our street and shoot in windows and doors killing and wounding anyone they possibly can. Soon enough the soviet army had send out thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks to defend itself and its families. Unbearable

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Score Point 4 (continued)

noise that the tanks made and the wounded cries for help filled the streets. The sirens began to go off and the ambulances were now circulating and picking up the wounded. It was about midnight when we heard a dozen of our soldiers being dispatched to each of the flat buildings. Each of the soldiers was fully armed and positioned near the entrance. I remember my mom's face when she heard the soldiers' footsteps. She was so scared, and her face the perfect picture of "Hate that I have ever seen. All of the sudden we heard "Stop go back!" Two shots were fired right into the building. Apparently someone had tried to go in the building. Thousands of bullets were shot by either side's snipers. It was like a nonstop fireworks display.

We dare not look out the windows, because at any moment a bullet might get you. In the morning as the constant bang has slowed down, my Dad had sent a tank with three soldiers and a superior officer to evacuate us and the surrounding families to the base. The tank was about three hundred yards away from our house, and it was a real task getting to it. Considering that the Syrian snipers were shooting at anything that moved. The soldiers had to cover us, literally cover us with themselves, and they were not wearing bullet proof vests. As I understood it, the task had been cut. One of the soldiers was covering me and he got shot right near the tank. I saw his face, it became so pale all of the sudden, he tried to keep going and

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Score Point 4 (continued)

as soon as I got on, he fell down. I later found out that he died on the scene. I also found out that he was an only child and had just turned seventeen. I will forever be greatfull to him, but I feel bad that he payed so dearly to save me. As we were riding through the streets that were covered in blood, fire and fallen buildings, I realized that Baku, the city I loved so much was no longer and never again the Baku I knew. One man's hate for another man led to thousands of deaths and the destruction of a peacefull coexistance of two races.

I learned that war is not at all glorious, it exsisting as it is made out to be. It brings terror, hate and death. Suddenly I understood my grandfather and how he felt.

That one experience taught me to never hate or used someone bad, to always put yourself in that person's shoes, and most of all to never judge. I wish I could have learned these lessons a different way, a way with no casualties.

Comments:

This response is commendable for its narrative rather than formulaic approach. Once into the narrative, the reader is engaged. Language use (word choice, sentence structure) is very skillful. The lack of clear transitions between paragraphs two and three and some minor errors in conventions keep this response from a higher score.

Score Point 4

I believe that experience is the best teacher, because nobody is a natural at everything. Experience has helped me understand, and taught me what to do in certain situations. Driving, work, and sports are just a few things that experience has helped me with.

Experience has helped me with driving in that the first time I got into a vehicle, I didn't know every thing. Take the right of way laws for example. Thanks to my drivers education instructor, I knew enough to get me started driving, and knowing when it was my turn to go. However, the more I drove, the more I learned, and the better I understood when I got to go. Merging to another lane is another thing that has been easier for me the more I drove. Just because my blind spots were clear one second, doesn't mean that somebody is not going to speed up the moment I put my blinker on to merge, so I always double check now. One thing that I have experienced alot is sliding in the rain. After the first time I did it I knew that depressing your brakes, and holding them down was not a very good idea. However driving is not the only thing that experience enhanced my ability to do.

Experience has greatly helped me at work as well as driving. It seems as if every day that I go to work it just gets a little bit easier, and the day goes by just a little bit quicker. At my last job there was a list of duties that must be completed every single night, or I would hear about it the following day. When I first started that job I used to have to look at that list every single night in order to know what it was that I had to do, but the more

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Suggestions that might improve student writing:

- Continue to challenge organizational formulas (work on more effective introductions and conclusions).
- Proofread for errors in conventions.

Score Point 4 (continued)

I worked it eventually came to the point where it wasn't even nessessary to have the list up there. Not only does experience help you with your job, but it helps you get a job. To get my last job, it helped that I had cashier as well as computer skills. Experience has also helped my in other activities.

Take sports for example. The first time I put on a helmet I didn't know who to block on every single play, nor did I kow how to read the line and how they were blocking. I had no clue what I-formation 32 pop was, or how to line up in a 50 defense. It was almost like my coaches were talking a whole different language. Now I know how to block on every single play, like the I-formation 32 pop, I now know that I have to "double down" with the center. If I am playing Defense I now know that if the "2 hole" opens up to watch for the run through that hole. And also through experience I have learned the "base, ace, tracker" method, and how to throw the "flipper."

Experience has helped me with three major things in my life. It has taught me what to do in certain situations, and helped me to understand them. That is why I believe experience is the best teacher.

Comments:

This response is organized, and the ideas are nicely developed and fully elaborated. Language use and varied sentence structure are skillful enough to compensate for the somewhat ordinary introduction/conclusion and some errors in conventions.

Score Point 5

"Experience is the best teacher" is a phrase containing a titanic amount of truth. By learning from our mistakes and failures of the past we gain the ability to look ahead to futures brilliant with the promise of prosperity. Everyone learns from past mistakes at some point in their lives, and my Uncle, Allan Cassady, was no exception.

In the early 1980s, the concept of "Emu Ranching" was swiftly becoming a very realistic way to earn money. The "outback style" sausage, a sausage combining the exotic flavor of emu meat with the well recognized taste of beef, was gaining popularity all over the world. A large number of flightless aviens were required so that enough sausages could be made to meet the demands of a hungry Earth.

Uncle Cassady saw an opportunity for profit, so he made a decision to start raising Emus on a ranch on the North Island of New Zealand. He was headstrong and ambitious, though he knew nothing on the care and feeding of the birds. There was no literature existent at the time that he could read and learn from. He boldly followed his dream and within weeks had a functioning ranch. Sadly, his first attempt was a miserable failure.

Allan erected several large pens for the birds, but soon found that pens were not

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Score Point 5 (continued)

enough to combat the challenge of local wildlife. After the onset of dusk, wild Dingos razed the birds along the western edge of Uncle Cassady's North pen. Several birds perished as a result of extremly high stress levels. Allen lost a good deal of money and 14 birds before a friendly neighbor conches informed him that he should be marking the pens with wallaby musk, a common dingo deterrent. Allen Cassady learned the hard way, but he hasn't lost a bird to a dingo since.

In a tragic accident, Uncle Cassady's beloved dog, Imperator, was trampled during a stampede while the emus were being herded to an alternate night-barn. He hadn't realized it at the time, but dogs and emus take a fierce dislike to each other. From the death of his favorite pet, Uncle Cassady learned a bitter lesson.

The final calamity on the ranch yielded the most critical lesson Uncle Cassady would ever learn. While reaching through the wire fence of the pen to attempt to investigate a seemingly ill bird, Allen managed to get his hand stuck. The emus rushed up to him and savagely assailed the unfortunate man's hand. It was literally pecked to shreads by the birds' massive beaks. The emergency team was able to salvage two fingers, but Uncle

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Cassady's thumb and remaining fingers were hopelessly lost in the gullets of a mob of angry birds. As a result of this attack, Uncle Cassady has become much more careful around these birds. He knows that the beak of one emu and the surrounding pecking muscles can be deadly.

Today, Uncle Allan Cassady is an extremely wealthy and renowned emu rancher. He has written a book entitled Emus: All-Around Birds (available in hardcover and paperback) in which he explains the "do's" and "don'ts" of Emu ranching. The lessons he learned from experience have served him well. Last month, he was listed at number seven in Forbes Magazine's list of "100 Most Successful Alternative Farmers". Without the lessons of his past, he would not be as well off as his is now.

Learn to recognize mistakes of the past, for they shall teach you invaluable life lessons. Experience is the best teacher. We must all strive to be the best students of experience.

Comments:

This clever response is fully engaging, thoroughly developed, and elaborated. Word choice and sentence structure are skillful and sophisticated. The author's tongue-in-cheek voice is engaging, yet the demands of the prompt and rubric – in terms of development, organization, etc. – are completely met.

Score Point 5

"Experience is the best teacher" ..... this is an expression which almost everyone can relate to, because throughout their life, everybody has had an experience, whether it was a good or a bad one, which has taught them something about the life they live, or an experience from which they grow and learn as a result, and obtain a better understanding of, so that they become stronger in understanding each day the value of their complex human nature that characterize each person as unique.

I can still vividly remember an expecience that I had when I was a young boy of six years and I learned an important lesson which taught me the value of life. It was at the time when my family and I were on vacation in the Tosoany region of Italy, and I lived with them in a small villa close to the Mediterranean Sea. All that summer I tried to learn how to swim, and I practiced for hours with my father in the shallow parts of the sea. Yet, it seemed to me that my goal was impossible to achieve, and all my hours of practice would never be rewarded. I wanted so desperately to swim, but something was always holding me back - maybe it was the fear of the water - so that, in the end, I would think to myself, "Oh, it's useless. I will never need to know how to swim anyway, right?" Yet, now as I look back over the years, I realize how wrong I was to ever have thought that knowing how to swim was of no use, for what was to happen just a few days later proved that knowing how to swim would save my life as a result.

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Score Point 5 (continued)

It occured after one of the usual tiring swimming lessons with my father. By now, I understood the techniques of swimming, but something still held me back from becoming proficient at it. I was still unsure and afraid. Resting awhile, I lay floating on the blue air mattress that had been my companion during so many of my swimming practices, something that I could hold on to and which gave me a sense of security. The sea was rocking me gently, with calm ripples rolling all throughout, and the calmness of the sea was like a lullaby that rocked me to rest. My father at this time had gone back up to the strand to sit with my mother and sister for a while. Everything seemed calm – or I thought – for I was totally oblivious to the fact that, in no time, the winds had started changing rapidly so that now what were once small ripples became real waves with some force. (The tide was coming in) Suddenly, all at once, I was underwater. A huge wave had overturned my air mattress and thrown me into the deep water with nothing to hold on to! Panic overpowered all of my senses. What was worse, the air mattress that had minutes before held me over the water, as my companion, was (now) over on top of my head, holding me from coming up to the surface of the water as if with an enemy force. My body was throbbing for air, my heart was pounding like the seconds counting from a timer. My mind raced wild with thoughts: What was I to do? Will I drown and never see my family again? Another wave of fear swept over my panicking body while being thrown underwater by the now merciless waves. Then, suddenly, as if in a gleam of hope, I remembered what my father had told me during one of the so many swimming practices. "Remember, son, whatever may happen, never try to panic, just keep moving." Using this inspiration, I stroked my small arms and feet against the force of the water, escaping from

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the barrier of the air mattress, and moving freely using the strokes I had learned to push myself up to the surface of the water. Gasping for air, I searched desperately for something to hold on to, in fear of being pulled down again. At that same moment, I felt my father's hands grasping mine firmly into his and wrapped me around his arms. Small tears were running down his eyes as he told me how horrible it had been for him to see me, thrown underwater by the waves from ashore. Oh, how relieved I was to see him and my family again, and to penetrate their concern and love for me. It had seemed I had been underwater for endless time, when in reality, it had only been seconds.

Yet, deep inside my heart, I realized how knowing how to swim had saved my life, and that if I hadn't been acquainted with the swimming techniques and strokes which my father had taught me during our practices, I would have surely been helpless and could have drowned. From that point in my life, I knew that I should always use experiences such as this one to illustrate how they enable me to learn an important lesson in life and learn something that I didn't discover about myself before, as well as to teach me the value of life itself. From my experience, I learned a lot of things about myself. When I learned how to swim I had always been afraid of something, which made me unsure, about the water, but my experience, in a way, helped me in overcoming that fear and I realized how vital it is in life to know how to swim, not only to save my own life in whatever may happen in the future, but to be able to save other lives as well.

Comments:
This strong response is fully developed and elaborated. The introductory section with its effective use of foreshadowing introduces a suspenseful tone that is sustained throughout the response. With its very strong use of figurative language, imagery, and sophisticated word choice and sentence structure, it reads more like a memoir than a student essay.

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